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### **Staten Island Children's Museum to Honor Staten Islanders Who Make a Difference for Children and Families**

**November 13, 2019**—The Staten Island Children's Museum's [Circle of Friends Awards Luncheon](#), now in its 28th year, honors people and organizations that are dedicated to improving the lives of Staten Island's children and families through their professional and personal endeavors.

In addition to these honorees, the Children's Museum also recognizes a "Kid of Achievement," sharing the success of a child or teen whose volunteerism and hard work has made a difference in the community, often while overcoming their own personal challenges.

These honorees will be celebrated at the Children's Museum annual benefit event on Wednesday, November 20 at the Hilton Garden Inn on Staten Island from 11:30 am – 1:30 pm.

The 2019 Circle of Friends honorees are: Early Childhood Direction Center; Steven Grillo, First Vice-President, [Staten Island Economic Development Corporation](#), Jaclyn M. Tacoronte, CEO and President, [JMT Media, LLC](#); and Kareem "Kay" Woods, Founder and Executive Director, K Woods Foundation. The 2019 "Kid of Achievement" Award honoree is Madison DiMaio.

#### **Early Childhood Direction Center**

The Early Childhood Direction Center (ECDC) served children and families of Staten Island for 30 years. The initial focus of the ECDC was to provide families with information and referral to resources in the community to secure appropriate services for children from birth through age 5 years old with or suspected of having a developmental delay. In 1998, the ECDC expanded to include workshops on special education services, giving valuable training to families in order to understand preschool special education services and preparing for the transition to Kindergarten. Soon after, it provided technical assistance to all early childhood programs within the region to promote inclusive educational settings and increase educational outcomes for preschoolers. The ECDC has assisted the parents of over 17,000 children and provided trainings to thousands of parents and early childhood professionals on a variety of topics. The ECDC team members are Laura Kennedy, Kathleen Nowak, Dolores Reig, Denise Dobrin, Peggy Gaul and Laura Auriti.

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### **Steven Grillo**

Steven Grillo has served as the First Vice-President of the Staten Island Economic Development Corporation (SIEDC) since 2013. In this role, Mr. Grillo oversees the non-profit's urban strategies group, which includes work related to Business Improvement District formation, affordable housing, transportation planning and environmental remediation, among other projects. Born and raised on Staten Island, Mr. Grillo has dedicated his career to public service in a variety of endeavors. During his tenure with SIEDC, Mr. Grillo has worked on several innovative projects with a focus on community development. The Staten Island Aerial Gondola, the Healthy Housing effort and the SI Skyway Urban Park are just a few of the efforts he has led to create a greener, healthier and stronger borough. Mr. Grillo has served on multiple boards and advisory committees, including the New York City Department of City Planning's East Shore Resilient Neighborhoods Program and the New York City Economic Development Corporation's West Shore Wetland Mitigation Bank Program. He has also been named a 2018 Urban Design Forum Fellow. Mr. Grillo is a graduate of the Michael J. Petrides School. He holds a bachelor's degree in geography and a master's degree in urban planning.

### **Jaclyn M. Tacoronte**

Jaclyn M. Tacoronte is an award-winning marketing and public relations professional with over 20 years of experience in both agency and client-side settings. She is currently the CEO & President of JMT Media, LLC, a New York certified Minority and Women-owned Business Enterprises boutique marketing, public relations and design firm that specializes in small business marketing and the non-profit sector. Mrs. Tacoronte is frequently a public relations guest speaker and panelist for New York State Council for the Arts, Staten Island Not For Profit Association, Center for Non Profit Success and Staten Island Partnership for Community Wellness. She is also Executive Producer of "*JMT The BEAT*," a new online series featuring the best of Staten Island's business, entertainment, arts, and theatre groups. Mrs. Tacoronte is the former Director of External Affairs & Business Development for Snug Harbor Cultural Center & Botanical Garden. Prior to that role, she served as the Marketing Director at The Young People's Chorus of New York City in residence at Jazz at Lincoln Center. She currently serves as the Marketing Chair for Colloquy Collective and as a Board Member for Staten Island MakerSpace. She is a former Board Member for On Your Mark. Mrs. Tacoronte received a Bachelor of Arts in Communications focused on International Business and a Master of Business Administration.

### **Kareem "Kay" Woods**

Kareem "Kay" Woods is recognized as a pillar in Staten Island's Park Hill neighborhood, where his steady dedication and investment have improved the lives of families and children. As the founder and leader of the K Woods Foundation, he works to connect local activists and organizations in support of initiatives that focus on uniting people and uplifting the community's youth. Mr. Woods achieves this by being present and creating unique experiences for the community. Most recently, he's organized bus trips for members of the community to travel to Bear Mountain, NY; managed the annual Park Hill Unity Day and back-to-school supply giveaway; arranged annual turkey drives and Christmas toy giveaways, and secured space in Park Hill to build a community center that will serve as a safe place for residents to gather and thrive. Most importantly, Mr. Woods serves as a mentor for children and teens in the community. He is well-known for being the person to go to for help, and despite having a family of his own and a thriving career in the music industry, he always finds the time and means to lend a hand.

### **Kid of Achievement: Madison DiMaio**

Madison DiMaio is a Sophomore at Susan Wagner High School and has dedicated countless hours of her time volunteering for a variety of causes, even as she manages her own daily

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challenges with epilepsy and learning disabilities. She has shared her time and talent as a volunteer for the March of Dimes, Toys for Tots, Special Olympics, the Golden Gate Nursing Home, and breast cancer awareness fundraisers, to name a few. She also lends a hand at No More Tears Rescue, an organization that facilitates the adoption of rescued dogs. As a child and teen, Madison has had to recover time and again from the seizures she experiences. However, her challenges have not stopped her from her excelling at her studies, making time for volunteer work or being part of her school's cheerleading team. She encourages and exemplifies the virtues of good citizenship and is committed to making a positive impact on the community.

The Children's Museum is once again grateful for the generous support of its "Circle of Friends," the event Committee members, and the event Co-Chairs, Alfredo P. Conti, Esq., from Conti Law Firm, Bill Spiezia from Rogers Calvanico Group, and Esmeralda Xheleshi from Empire State Bank.

"On behalf of the Circle of Friends Committee, I would like to share our congratulations and gratitude to all of our honorees for their commitment to Staten Island," said Xheleshi. This group of honorees powerfully demonstrates that people from all walks of life can and do make meaningful contributions to create the best for our borough's family and children."

For photos of the honorees, please contact Jennifer Dudley, Director of External Affairs at the Staten Island Children's Museum, at [jdudley@sichildrensmuseum.org](mailto:jdudley@sichildrensmuseum.org).

#### **About the Staten Island Children's Museum**

The Staten Island Children's Museum is located on the grounds of Snug Harbor Cultural Center & Botanical Garden, 1000 Richmond Terrace, Staten Island, NY 10301. For more information, call 718-273-2060, email [info@sichildrensmuseum.org](mailto:info@sichildrensmuseum.org), or visit [sichildrensmuseum.org](http://sichildrensmuseum.org).

The Staten Island Children's Museum is housed in a building owned by the City of New York and its operation is made possible, in part, with public funds provided through the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs with support from the Staten Island delegation to the NYC Council. Significant operating support is also provided by the NYS Council on the Arts, Corporations, Foundations, the Trustees and Members.

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